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United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Veterinary Services

Importing A Pet Bird

**Special Rules for Bringing
Pet Birds into the
United States**



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Importing A Pet Bird

What is a Pet Bird?

A pet bird is any bird—except for poultry—intended for the pleasure of its owner and not for resale. Poultry, even if kept as pets, are brought into the country and quarantined under different rules. USDA defines poultry as including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, partridge, ducks, geese, swans, quail, peafowl, and similar avian species.

Importing a Pet Bird

Special rules apply for pet birds brought into the United States (from all countries except Canada). If you're bringing your pet bird into the country, you must . . .

QUARANTINE your bird (or birds) for at least 30 days in a USDA-operated import facility at one of eight ports of entry. The bird, which must be caged when you bring it in, will be transferred to a special isolation cage at the import facility. Privately owned cages cannot be stored by USDA. Birds will be cared for by veterinarians and other personnel of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

RESERVE quarantine space for your bird. A bird without a reservation will be accepted only if space is available. If none exists, this bird will be refused entry or transported—at your expense—to another entry port where there is space. In any case, a fee must be paid before the bird is placed in quarantine.

PAY USDA an advance fee of \$80 to be applied to the cost of quarantine services and necessary tests and examinations. Currently, quarantine costs are \$100 for one bird or \$125 per isolation cage if more than one bird is put in a cage. These charges may change without notice. You may also have to pay private companies for brokerage and transportation services to move the bird from the port of entry to the USDA import facility.

OBTAIN a health certificate in the nation of the bird's origin. This is a certificate signed by a national government veterinarian stating that the bird has been examined, shows no evidence of communicable disease, and is being exported in accordance with the laws of that country. The certificate must be signed within 30 days of the time the bird will arrive in the

Supersedes. . . "Worth Repeating,
Special Rules for Bringing Pet Birds into
the United States," issued January 1980.

August 1984

Slightly revised June 1985

United States. If not in English, it must be translated at your cost. NOTE: APHIS Form 17-23 includes an acceptable health certificate in English.

ARRANGE for shipping the bird to its final destination when it is released from quarantine. A list of brokers for each of the eight ports of entry may be requested from the USDA port veterinarian at the time quarantine space is reserved. Most brokers offer transportation services from entry ports to final destination.

NOTE: Large groups of birds are imported under separate rules for commercial shipments of birds.

Why All the Rules?

Serious diseases of birds and poultry can be carried by pet birds entering this country. Parrots from South America are believed to have caused an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in southern California in 1971-74. Eradication cost \$56 million and the destruction of 12 million birds, mostly laying hens. Import rules for personally owned pet birds were put into effect in 1972 and strengthened in 1980. These rules provide a better defense against the introduction of this highly contagious disease.

Ports of Entry for Personally Owned Pet Birds

Pet birds must enter at one of these ports. To reserve quarantine space, write to the USDA veterinarian at the city where you'll be arriving and request Form 17-23. Return the completed form, with your check or money order for \$80 made payable to USDA, to the same address. The balance of the fee will be due before the bird is released from quarantine.

NOTE: Protected birds cannot be imported through Mexican border ports. Contact Fish and Wildlife Service for details.

NEW YORK, N.Y.
Port Veterinarian
JFK International Airport
Cargo Bldg. 80, Room 101
Jamaica, NY 11430
(718) 917-1727

MIAMI, Fla.
Port Veterinarian
8120 N.W. 53rd St.,
Suite 102
Miami, FL 33166
(305) 350-6921

NOGALES, Ariz.
Port Veterinarian
P.O. Box 1411
Nogales, AZ 85621
(602) 287-4717

HIDALGO, Texas
Port Veterinarian
P.O. Box 3068
Brownsville, TX
(512) 542-7812

EL PASO, Texas
Port Veterinarian
109 N. Oregon, 12th Floor
El Paso, TX 79901
(915) 541-7691

HONOLULU, Hawaii
Port Veterinarian
P.O. Box 50001
Honolulu, HI 96850
(808) 546-7529

SAN YSIDRO, Calif.
Port Veterinarian
P.O. Box 126
San Ysidro, CA 92073
(619) 428-7332

LOS ANGELES, Calif.
Port Veterinarian
5510 West 104th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
(213) 215-2352

The Quarantine Period

During quarantine, pet birds will be kept in individually controlled isolation cages to prevent any infection from spreading. Psittacine or hookbill birds will be identified with a leg band. They will be fed a medicated feed to control psittacosis, a flu-like disease transmissible to humans. Food and water will be readily available to the birds.

Young, immature birds needing daily hand-feeding cannot be accepted because removing them from the isolation cage for feeding would disrupt biological security.

While the birds are in quarantine, APHIS veterinarians will test them to make certain they are free of any communicable disease of poultry. Infected birds will be refused entry; at the owner's option they will be returned to the country of origin (at the owner's expense) or humanely destroyed.

Special Exceptions

No USDA quarantine (and therefore no advance reservations or fees) and no foreign health certificate are required for:

- U.S. birds taken out of the country if special arrangements are made in advance.

Before leaving the United States, you must get a health certificate for the bird from a veterinarian accredited by USDA and make certain the bird is identified with a tattoo or numbered leg band. The health certificate, with this identification recorded on it, must be presented at the time of reentry. While out of the country, you must keep your pet bird separate from other birds.

Birds returning to the United States may come in through any of the eight ports of entry for these birds, depending on the time of arrival and other factors. Contact APHIS for information on this prior to leaving the country.

- Birds from Canada. Pet birds may enter the United States from Canada on your signed statement that they have been in your possession for at least 90 days, were kept separate from other birds during the period, and are healthy.

Birds must be inspected by an APHIS veterinarian at designated ports of entry for land, air, and ocean shipments. These ports are subject to change, so for current information contact APHIS import staff at Hyattsville, MD 20782 or phone (301) 436-8172.

Pet birds from Canada are not quarantined because Canada's animal disease control and eradication programs and import rules are similar to those of the United States.

NOTE: Protected birds may require Canadian and/or U.S. permits and may not be allowed through Canadian border ports. Contact Fish and Wildlife Service for details.

Other Agencies Involved

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) enforces an international treaty—The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)—that restricts imports and exports of many species of birds. Some CITES birds can be imported as pets if they enter the U.S. through a major port, are declared to Federal inspectors, and are accompanied by appropriate CITES permits. FWS will send you a copy of their booklet "Facts about Federal Wildlife Laws" upon request and answer any questions about how you can comply with CITES regulations.

FWS: P.O. Box 3654, Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 235-1903

The U.S. Department of Treasury, Customs Service (USCS), maintains a constant alert for smuggled birds.

USCS: 1301 Constitution Ave., Washington, DC 20229 (202) 566-5286

Two Serious Threats to Birds

EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE—As a bird owner, you should know the symptoms of this devastating disease of poultry and other birds. If your bird shows signs of incoordination and breathing difficulties—or if there should be any unusual die-off in your aviary—contact your local veterinarian or animal health official immediately. Place dead birds in plastic bags and refrigerate them for submittal to a diagnostic laboratory. Keep in mind that this disease is highly contagious and you should isolate any newly purchased birds for at least 30 days. Although exotic Newcastle disease is not a general health hazard, it can cause eye infection in humans directly exposed to infected birds.

SMUGGLING—If you're tempted to buy a bird you suspect may have been smuggled into the United States. . .don't! Smuggled birds are a persistent threat to the health of pet birds and poultry flocks in this country. Indications are that all recent outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease in cage and aviary birds were caused by birds entering the United States illegally. If you have information about the possibility of smuggled birds, report it to any Customs office or call APHIS at Hyattsville, MD (301) 436-8061.

